

ELECTION REPORT 2015

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Louisiana Voters Paying Little Attention to Campaign at Early Stage

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Sponsored by:
The Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs
Manship School of Mass Communication
Louisiana State University

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

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About the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs

The Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, an integral part of Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, uses the intellectual muscle of the school's faculty to help solve practical problems and advance good government initiatives. The Reilly Center's mission is to generate thoughtful programs, dialogue, and research about mass communication and its many faceted relationships with social, economic, and political issues. Evident in everything the Center does is its commitment to strengthen and advance the Manship School's national leadership in media and politics.

The Center's agenda is diverse and fluid – from the annual John Breaux Symposium, which brings in national experts to discuss a topic that has received little or no attention, to conducting the annual Louisiana Survey, a vital resource for policymakers, which tracks advancements and regressions of citizen attitudes about state services. It takes seriously its role, within the Flagship University, to respond quickly in times of crisis to help state governance, such as during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Its action-oriented and partnership-driven philosophy underscores the Reilly Center's dedication to tackling ideas and issues that explore the relationship of media and the public in democratic society.

About the Public Policy Research Lab

Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab (PPRL) is a research center dedicated to high quality, state-of-the-art data collection and analytics, with a special emphasis on survey research. PPRL is a joint effort of the Manship School of Mass Communication's Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

PPRL provides a variety of services including survey research, 'big data' analytics, social media tracking, and focus group interviews. The Lab is primarily known for its telephone survey work. PPRL has 52 computer-assisted telephone interview call stations and a corps of highly-trained, well-supervised professional callers. It is one of the largest phone survey data collection facilities in the Southeastern Conference.

The Lab is dedicated to meeting the unique goals and objectives for each project by working closely with those seeking data, research expertise, or analysis. PPRL's clients have included: the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, the Louisiana Department of Labor, Louisiana Public Broadcasting, the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

The Public Policy Research Lab is a non-partisan center for survey research and data analysis. The lab does not take candidates or political parties as clients. While the lab occasionally asks about approval and favorability toward public officials in the state of Louisiana, we do not ask "horserace" or "trial heat" questions about elections in Louisiana – that is, questions about whom respondents plan to vote for.

More information on previous surveys may be found at: www.survey.lsu.edu

For more information about PPRL, please contact:

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Executive Summary

With the 2015 governor's race still several months away, few voters have begun tuning in to the contest. Only 25% are following news about the election closely and just 22% say they have given much thought to it. Additional findings about what Louisiana voters think about this year's race for governor include:

- Neither party yet holds an edge in voter engagement. Republicans (29%) are paying more attention to news about the campaign than Democrats (22%), but fewer of them (13%) say they have given much thought to the election than Democrats (30%).
- The youngest voters and those with less formal education are the least engaged with the campaign.
- Thirty eight percent of voters say they are satisfied with the current slate of candidates running for governor.
- A majority of voters are not yet familiar enough with three of the four major candidates to offer an opinion about them: Scott Angelle (83%), John Bel Edwards (76%), and Jay Dardenne (60%). David Vitter, in contrast, is the most recognized candidate with only 28% of voters unable to offer an opinion on him.
- All four major candidates have net favorable ratings – meaning that more people hold favorable opinions of them than hold unfavorable opinions.

Voters Not Yet Tuned in to Campaign for Governor

With the 2015 election for governor in Louisiana still several months away, few voters are paying attention. Only one fourth (25%) say they are following news about the election “very closely” or “fairly closely” (see Table 1). Forty percent say they are following the race “not too closely”, and another 35% say they are not following the election at all.

Similarly, few voters say they have given much thought to the election so far. Just 22% of voters have say they have given “quite a lot” of thought to the 2015 race for governor, leaving 78% who have given it “only a little” thought.

Neither party appears especially mobilized by the election yet. On the one hand, Republicans (29%) are more likely than Democrats to (22%) to follow news about the election. On the other hand, Democrats (30%) are more likely to say they have thought about the election than Republicans (13%).

Differences across education and age are more consistent. Generally, college educated voters are paying more attention and spending more time thinking about the election than those with less formal schooling. Among voters with a college degree, 37% are following news coverage of the election closely and 28% have given a lot of thought to it. Among voters with no more than a high school diploma just 16% say they are

following the election in the news and 21% say they have given it a lot of thought.

The youngest are the least engaged with the election so far. Less than one in five voters between the ages of 18 and 29 (18%) are following news about the election, and just 4% have given it a lot of thought. In contrast, about one third of voters who are at least 65 years old (34%) are following media coverage of the election.

Despite paying relatively little attention to the election, most voters are willing to offer an opinion about the overall slate of candidate. When asked if they are satisfied with the likely candidates for governor this year, only 23% say they do not know. Nearly two in five voters (38%) say they are “very satisfied” or “fairly satisfied” with the selection of candidates they have to choose from. A similar share says they are either “not too satisfied” or “not at all satisfied”.

Satisfaction is highest among Republicans (44%), with Democrats and Independents at 36% and 32% respectively. Voters in the Baton Rouge area and in the southwestern part of the state are especially pleased with their options as well.

It is not uncommon to find voters paying so little attention to the campaign this far out from Election Day. In the coming months, voters will likely begin to pay more attention and find a particular candidate they like the most.¹ As they settle into these decisions, their satisfaction with the slate of choices will likely rise as well.

¹ For evidence of this pattern in statewide elections generally, see Thomas M. Carsey (2000) *Campaign Dynamics: The Race for Governor*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press as well as Kim Fridkin

Kahn and Patrick J. Kenney (1999) *The Spectacle of U.S. Senate Campaigns*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Table 1: Voter Engagement Low at Early Stage of Campaign

	Following news about election very/fairly closely %	Given quite a lot of thought to the governor's election %	Very/fairly satisfied with candidates for governor %
All	25	22	38
Republicans	29	13	44
Democrats	22	30	36
Independents	27	20	32
White	27	17	39
Black	21	29	36
Other	23	27	34
White Republicans	29	13	43
White Democrats	27	25	35
White Independents	26	20	33
Black Democrats	17	31	35
Men	26	24	39
Women	24	20	36
18-29	18	4	44
30-44	19	22	25
45-64	29	27	47
65+	34	27	41
High school or less	16	21	43
Some college	26	17	32
College degree or higher	37	28	36
Southwest Louisiana	26	20	42
New Orleans Area	25	23	18
Baton Rouge Area	31	24	58
Southeast Louisiana	23	15	38
Northwest Louisiana	11	32	25
Northeast Louisiana	30	18	36

Based on registered voters. Survey conducted March 10 to March 31, 2015.

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Major Candidates Remain Unfamiliar, but All Have Net Favorable Ratings

Voters' lack of attention to the campaign is also evident in their opinions of the candidates. The survey included questions asking voters whether they have favorable or unfavorable opinions of four announced major candidates: Public Service Commissioner Scott Angelle, Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne, State Senator John Bel Edwards, and U.S. Senator David Vitter. The survey also included questions about two other public officials not currently seeking the governor's office: State Treasurer John Kennedy and New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu. In lieu of offering a favorable or unfavorable opinion, a respondent could indicate that he did not know enough to say one way or the other.

A majority of voters know too little about three of the major candidates to offer opinions about them – Angelle (83%), Edwards (76%), and

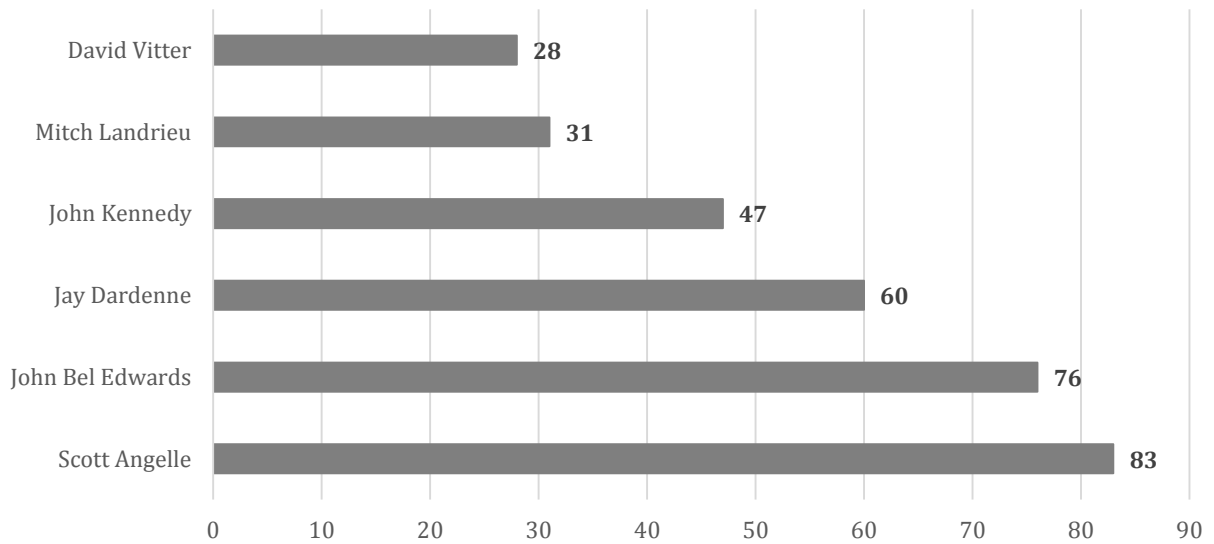
Dardenne (60%). The challenge for these three candidates is to make themselves better known to Louisiana voters in the coming months. As they do so, these numbers will likely come down.

Vitter has much higher name recognition at this early stage of the campaign than his opponents. Only 28% of voters are too unfamiliar with the two term U.S. Senator to offer an opinion about him (see Figure 1). Yet, name recognition brings its own mix of benefits and challenges. Of all four candidates, Vitter has the highest share of voters with a favorable opinion of him (42%). He also has the highest share (30%) with an unfavorable opinion (see Figure 2). On balance, he has a net favorable rating meaning that more voters have a favorable opinion of him than an unfavorable opinion.

All four major candidates have net favorable ratings. The question for each of them is how to maintain or even expand this edge as voters begin to tune in to watch them navigate the ups and downs of the campaign season.

Figure 1: Who?

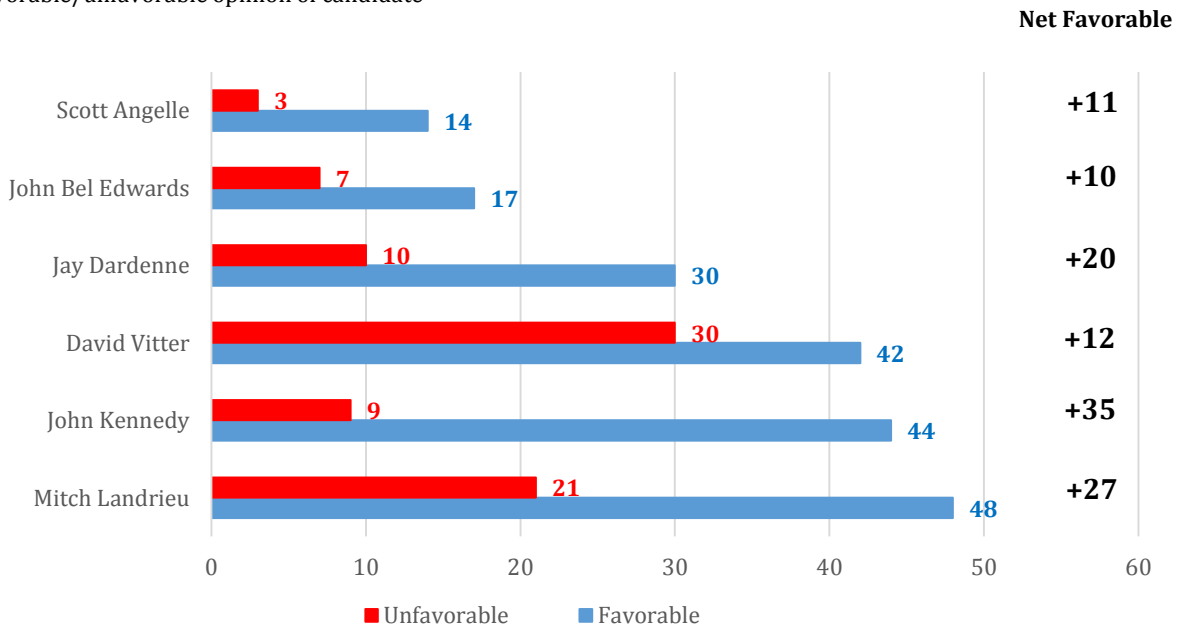
% saying do not know enough to evaluate candidate



Source: Spring 2015 Omnibus Survey
Public Policy Research Lab

Figure 2: More Positive than Negative Feelings toward Candidates and Other Public Officials

% having favorable/unfavorable opinion of candidate



Source: Spring 2015 Omnibus Survey
Public Policy Research Lab

Survey Methodology

Data in this report are from a randomly selected, statewide representative group of adult residents of Louisiana. Data were collected via telephone interviews conducted from March 10 to March 31, 2015, among a randomly selected state sample of 1,045 adult residents (18 years or older). The survey includes a traditional landline telephone survey combined with a survey of Louisiana cell phone users. The combined sample of 1,045 respondents includes 525 respondents interviewed on a landline and 520 respondents interviewed on a cell phone. The design of the landline sample ensures representation of both listed and unlisted numbers by use of random digit dialing. The cell phone sample is randomly drawn from known, available phone number banks dedicated to wireless service.

The response rate is 21% for the landline sample and 10% for the cell phone sample. This response rate is the percentage of residential households or personal cell phones for which an interview is completed. The rates are calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's method for Response Rate 3 as published in their Standard Definitions. Response rates have declined steadily for all surveys over the past several decades. The response rates for the 2015 Louisiana Survey are within the range of what national survey research organizations such as Gallup and the Pew Research Center have reported.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative procedure that matches race and ethnicity, education, household income, gender and age to known profiles for Louisiana found in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. The sample is also weighted for population density by parish using parameters from 2012 United States Census data. The specific factors used for weighting are: parish of residence, gender, age, household income, education, race, and Hispanic ethnicity.

Weighting cannot eliminate every source of nonresponse bias. However, proper conduction of random sampling combined with accepted weighting techniques has a strong record of yielding unbiased results. The margin of error and tests for statistical significance take this weighting into account.

Results in this report are for 910 respondents reporting they are registered voters. The overall survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, as accounted for through the margin of error, readers should recognize that questions wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Please direct any questions concerning survey methodology to:

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Regional Definitions

Respondents are divided into six regional groups based on parish of residence using the following classifications:

New Orleans Area: Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard
[173 respondents]

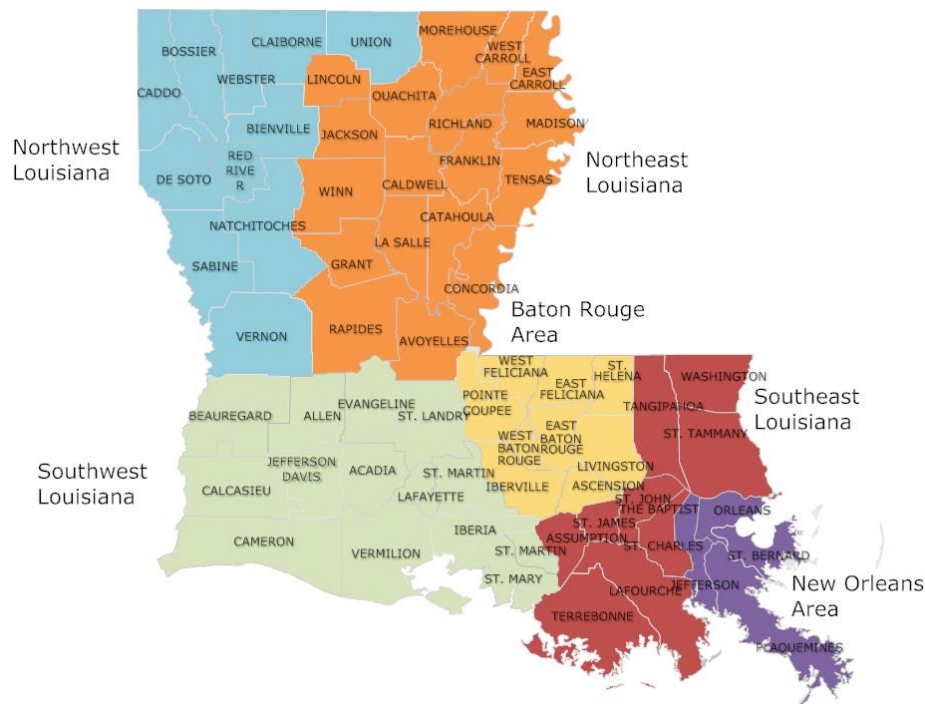
Baton Rouge Area: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Point Coupee, St. Helena, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana
[215 respondents]

Northwest Louisiana: Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, De Soto, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Union, Vernon, Webster
[140 respondents]

Northeast Louisiana: Avoyelles, Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, Grant, Jackson, La Salle, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Rapides, Richland, Tensas, West Carroll, Winn
[148 respondents]

Southwest Louisiana: Acadia, Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, Iberia, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Vermilion
[199 respondents]

Southeast Louisiana (excluding New Orleans Area and Baton Rouge Area): Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Washington
[170 respondents]



Survey Toplines

NOTE: Results are for respondents reporting that they are registered to vote. Frequencies represent percentages of respondents who received the question. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

INTRO to Q1 – Q6. For each of the following individuals, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of that person. If you don't know enough about him to have an opinion, you can just tell me that. [Order of Q1 – Q6 randomized.]

Q1. David Vitter

Very favorable	16
Somewhat favorable	26
Somewhat unfavorable	14
Very unfavorable	16
Don't know enough to say	28

Q2. Scott Angelle

Very favorable	5
Somewhat favorable	9
Somewhat unfavorable	2
Very unfavorable	1
Don't know enough to say	83

Q3. Jay Dardenne

Very favorable	9
Somewhat favorable	21
Somewhat unfavorable	8
Very unfavorable	2
Don't know enough to say	60

Q4. John Bel Edwards

Very favorable	5
Somewhat favorable	12
Somewhat unfavorable	4
Very unfavorable	3
Don't know enough to say	76

Q5. Mitch Landrieu

Very favorable	19
Somewhat favorable	30
Somewhat unfavorable	11
Very unfavorable	10
Don't know enough to say	31

Q6. John Kennedy

Very favorable	16
Somewhat favorable	28
Somewhat unfavorable	5
Very unfavorable	4
Don't know enough to say	47

Q7. Have you been following news about the candidates for the 2015 governor's election in Louisiana very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all?

Very closely	6
Fairly closely	19
Not too closely	40
Not at all	35
Don't know / Refused (Volunteered)	0

Q8. How much thought would you say you've given to the governor's election, quite a lot or only a little?

Quite a lot	22
Only a little	78
Don't know / Refused (Volunteered)	1

Q9. As it's shaping up so far, what's your opinion of the likely candidates for governor this year? Would you say that you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not too satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the likely choices?

Very satisfied	11
Fairly satisfied	26
Not too satisfied	25
Not at all satisfied	14
Don't know / Refused (Volunteered)	23